

REMARKS

Reconsideration and allowance in view of the foregoing amendment and the following remarks are respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 4-6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 15, 19, 23-25 and 30-35 are now pending.

Claims 1, 3-5, 15, 19, 22, 24-25 and 34 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bonzo in view of Higuchi and further in view of Noddin. Claims 1 and 3-5 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Higuchi et al in view of Bonzo and further in view of Noddin. Claims 6-8 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as unpatentable over JP 03-169312 in view of Bonzo and further in view of Higuchi et al. Claims 9, 11-12, 32-33 and 35 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) over JP 03-169312 in view of Bonzo and further in view of Higuchi and Asoshina et al. Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection. Claim 23 was rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bonzo in view of Higuchi and further in view of Noddin and Ogawa. Applicant respectfully traverses these rejections. However, to advance prosecution, the limitations previously presented in claims 28 and 29 have been respectively presented in independent claims 1 and 15. The limitations of previously presented claim 28 and dependent claim 7 have also been incorporated in an amended claim 6 and claims 11 and 12 have been amended to incorporate the limitations previously presented in claim 28. It is therefore respectfully submitted that the above prior art rejections have been mooted by the amendments presented hereinabove.

Claims 28-31 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bonzo in view of Higuchi and further in view of Noddin and Gawa et al. Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Each of applicant's claims is presently limited to the feature that the positions to be irradiated with high-density energy beam are determined based on the positional

information of the cell end acquired by an information processing means that recognizes the positions of the cell ends visually through the film attached to the end surface of the honeycomb structure body and wherein the image processing means produces the positional information of the cell ends in such a manner that the end surface of the honeycomb structure body is segmented into a plurality of blocks, for each of which the image data for an area including the particular block and a portion duplicated with at least a part of an adjacent block is collected, and the image data for all the blocks are coupled to each other by superposing the duplicated areas thereby to produce the positional information on the cell ends for the entire end surface.

The Examiner cites Gawa et al as allegedly teaching a process for forming holes in a resin sheet that includes dividing the resin sheet into a plurality of demarcation sections, forming holes using a laser in each section individually and then translating the resin sheet to the next demarcation section. Based on this alleged teaching of Gawa, the Examiner asserts that it would have been obvious to use a laser control process including a demarcation of the sheet into multiple sections and processing each section in the combined process of the primary references. It is respectfully submitted, however, that the Examiner's citation to Gawa and proposed modification of the primary references does not meet the limitations of each of applicant's independent claims as summarized above. More particularly, an important technical feature of the invention, which is specified in each of the presently pending independent claims, is that the image data for all the blocks are coupled to each other by superposing the duplicated areas. According to this feature, an advantageous effect is realized in that the image data for the whole end surface of the honeycomb structure body can be accurately formed by superposing the duplicated portions, thereby making it possible to acquire accurate positional information for each cell end. (See in this regard page 19, lines 3-7 of the specification). In contrast to the claimed invention, none of the prior art references cited by the Examiner describes the above-noted claimed feature of the invention. For instance, in Gawa, while it is described that a sheet is divided up into a

plurality of demarcation portions. There is no teaching or suggestion of coupling image data for all the blocks to each other by superposing duplicated areas.

Thus, although, as characterized by the Examiner, Gawa teaches demarcation of a resin sheet into multiple sections as processing each section on an individual basis and moving to the next section to be processed, according to the claimed invention each image data is collected in a manner so as to include data on a portion duplicated with an adjacent block and image data for all the blocks are then coupled to each other by superposing the duplicated areas, thereby to produce positional information on the cell ends for the entire end surface. No such teaching is provided by Gawa nor the remaining art of record so that the independent claims presented, each of which include this advantageous characteristic of an exemplary embodiment of the invention, are submitted to be patentable over the applied art whether taken singly or in combination.

It is further respectfully submitted that in the absence of applicant's disclosure, the skilled artisan would not be motivated by Gawa to modify the primary references of record. In this regard, Gawa describes only a laser processing method and does not in any way teach or suggest processing relating to a ceramic honeycomb structure. Thus, in the absence of applicant's disclosure, it is respectfully submitted that there is no motivation to modify the ceramic honeycomb structure described in the primary references in view of the Gawa disclosure.

It is clear that the initial burden of establishing a basis for denying patentability to a claimed invention rests upon the Examiner. In re Piasecki, 745 F. 2d 1468, 223 USPQ 785 (Fed. Cir. 1984). In establishing a *prima facie* case of obviousness under 35 U.S.C. § 103, it is incumbent upon the Examiner to provide a reason why one of ordinary skill in the art would have been led to arrive at the claimed invention from the prior art. Ex parte Clapp, 227 USPQ 972 (BPAI 1985). As the CAFC has said, obviousness cannot be established by combining the teachings of the prior art to produce the claimed invention, absent some teaching, suggestion or incentive

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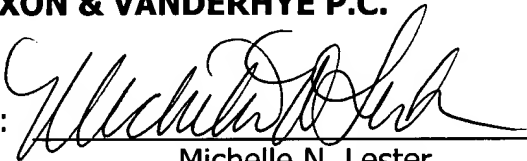
supporting the combination. ACS Hospital Systems v Montefiore Hospital, 221 USPQ 929, 933 (Fed. Cir. 1984). There must be a suggestion in the art relied upon to use what one reference discloses in or in combination with the disclosure of the other reference or references relied upon by the Examiner. In re Grabiak, 226 USPQ 870, 872 (Fed. Cir. 1986).

In view of the foregoing, reconsideration and withdrawal of the Examiner's prior art rejection and early allowance of this application are solicited.

All objections and rejections having been addressed, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance and an early Notice to that effect is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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